

EMS Inspectors Ensure South Carolina's Ambulances Have Lifesaving Equipment On Board

Issue

Terry Horton, chief of compliance for the Division of EMS and Trauma at the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), has a personal stake in the mission of the Division. "I have family and friends in this state, and I want to make sure that when they need an ambulance, the crew is trained, and the ambulance has the necessary equipment on board to treat any emergency," he said

In 2007, Mr. Horton and his staff of EMS inspectors face the daunting task of inspecting 1,191 ambulances and 260 EMS services for compliance with state EMS regulations. In past years this mission has been made difficult by a shortage of EMS inspectors and an ever-increasing number of ambulances and EMS services. In 2006, 67 ambulances, 15 percent of the total ambulances that were inspected, failed initial inspections because of missing equipment and sanitation issues. In some instances, vital resuscitative equipment was missing.

Intervention

The Division of EMS and Trauma set a goal of reducing the number of ambulances that failed initial inspections through a program of intensive inspections and other compliance interventions. An investment of \$179,000 from the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant enabled the Division of EMS and Trauma to increase the number of ambulance inspections and other compliance interventions. The EMS Inspectors are now involved in every aspect of the operations of the EMS services assigned to them: they examine treatment protocols, assist EMS services in taking corrective actions, and inform them of the latest trends in training. In an effort to reduce ambulance inspection failures, the following interventions were accomplished:

- A total of 556 ambulances were inspected for compliance with equipment and sanitation regulations;
- A total of 1,153 telephone consults were conducted with EMS services regarding compliance issues; and
- Treatment protocols, training records, and drug formularies for 140 EMS services were examined for compliance.

Impact

Mr. Lanny Bernard, director of Lancaster County EMS, sees the increased visibility of EMS inspectors in the EMS community and the increased emphasis on ambulance inspections as an affirmation of a long held philosophy. "I expect nothing short of excellence from the professionals at Lancaster County EMS, and I take great comfort in the fact that those same standards are required throughout the EMS profession in South Carolina," he said.

The enhanced inspection efforts have resulted in:

- A decline in the number of ambulances that failed initial inspections from 15 percent in 2006 to five percent in 2007 (27 ambulances); and
- The re-licensure of 140 EMS services with only two EMS services failing re-licensure on first notice. The two EMS services made necessary corrections and were subsequently re-licensed.

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